



## Urban Policy and Gentrification

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### ► To cite this version:

Anne Clerval, Antoine Fleury. Urban Policy and Gentrification: A critical analysis using the case of Paris. Lidia Diappi. Emergent Phenomena in Housing Markets. Gentrification, Housing Search, Polarization, Springer, pp.151-170, 2012, 978-3-7908-2863-4. 10.1007/978-3-7908-2864-1\_7 . halshs-00737295

**HAL Id: halshs-00737295**

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Submitted on 25 May 2015

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This the pre-print of Clerval, A., Fleury, A. (2012) "Urban Policy and Gentrification. A critical analysis using the case of Paris", in Diappi, L. (ed.) *Emergent Phenomena in Housing Markets. Gentrification, Housing Search, Polarization*, Berlin/Heidelberg, Physica, pp. 151-170.

## **Urban Policy and Gentrification. A critical analysis using the case of Paris**

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### **Abstract**

This paper contributes to the reappraisal of the issues approached in gentrification studies. It focuses on the role of public policies in the gentrification of the Paris inner city and, in addition to presenting technical aspects, it provides a critical analysis of this phenomenon, aiming to shed light on the political meaning of public action occurring there today. The paper gives an overview of the actors, factors and spatial dynamics involved in the gentrification process since the 1980s and then focuses in more detail on public action since 2001, when the left (*Parti socialiste*) took over the Paris municipality. While political goals still remain relatively ambiguous, the authors of the present paper set out to clarify the global consequences of public policies in housing, public spaces and culture. In spite of the city Council's will to overhaul public policies, its action has been unsuccessful so far in stopping the gentrification process in Paris. It has indeed actually contributed to it by transforming public spaces and by the modes of cultural action implemented.

**Keywords:** gentrification, public policies, urbanism, housing, public spaces, cultural policy, Paris.

## Introduction

In recent years the phenomenon of gentrification has aroused interest among French researchers, who have used this concept to analyse trends in inner cities (Bidou-Zachariassen, 2003; Simon, 2005; Fijalkow & Préteceille, 2006; Authier & Bidou-Zachariassen, 2008). The concept, which has been theorised and studied since the 1970s mainly by researchers in the UK and North America, refers to a particular form of what the French would refer to generally as *embourgeoisement*, which alters the social composition, housing patterns and public spaces in working-class quarters. The concept of gentrification has the advantage of focusing on the interactions between changes in social structures and changes in the urban space. The term, coined by a Marxist sociologist in the 1960s in relation to London, originally contained a dimension of criticism aiming to denounce the eviction of the working classes from the city centre (Glass, 1964). Even so, despite some early work pointing to the role of public and private agents in this process (Smith, 1979) the notion of gentrification has since been used to describe a process that is at once inexorable and positive in the "revitalisation" of inner cities (Slater, 2006). This removal of the critical perspective in the research on gentrification has been interpreted by the sociologist Wacquant (2008) as being the result of the general marginalisation of the working classes in political, media and scientific discourse, and also of the underestimation of the part played by public authorities in the dynamics of gentrification. Several recent studies have pinpointed the importance of this influence, showing how gentrification can even, in some instances, become a full-scale local political strategy (Smith, 2003; Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). In their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Urban Studies* devoted to the role of public policies in the phenomenon of gentrification, Lees and Ley (2008) reposition these local policies within the more general context of neo-liberalism and international competition between cities. The "third wave" of gentrification, symbolised by the conversion of the London docks into a new world-class business quarter, appears to federate researchers, who hitherto had opposed one another over the causes of gentrification: Lees and Ley (2008) align themselves on the analysis by Smith (1982), who argued the key position of gentrification in world capitalism at the time of the neo-liberal turning point. They also recall how the consensus-making objective of a social mix can be used today to favour the gentrification of working-class quarters.

The present paper aims to contribute to this reappraisal of the issues of gentrification as encountered in the literature, and proposes an analysis based on the case of Paris, which has, paradoxically, not been widely studied in this respect. Using material from two theses that have recently been presented (Fleury, 2007; Clerval, 2008b), the paper studies the roles of public policies in the process of gentrification in Paris. The approach chosen sets out to avoid being solely technical, and aims

to propose a genuinely critical analysis of the issues, and highlight the meaning of public policies implemented today in the Paris inner city. We will first show that gentrification in Paris appears as being mainly the result of private initiative; public authorities played the part of accompanying and accelerating the process, even if this is less easy to perceive than elsewhere. In a second section we will concentrate on the public policies implemented in Paris since the Municipality shifted to the Socialist left in 2001: in the area of housing, public spaces and culture we will endeavour to clarify the issues involved and the effects of these policies on the gentrification process. Finally, we will propose an interpretation of these different policies, showing that they are consistent with an accompaniment of the process of gentrification.

## **Characteristics of the gentrification process in Paris**

### ***The specific features of Paris compared to other metropolises***

In Paris, gentrification appears as a process occurring late in comparison to London or New York. There are several reasons to explain this. Some emphasise the fact that the French capital has been the place of residence for the ruling elite for a long time, and this is indeed still true (Préteceille, 2007). The heart of the Paris agglomeration did not experience the *white flight* noted in American cities where the middle and upper class whites left the city centres for the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s. Only the *Marais* quarter in Paris has seen a desertion and a later return of the wealthier classes in the course of its history, the first type of trend to be described as gentrification, in reference to numerous Victorian areas of London (Glass, 1964). Nevertheless, the extent of areas of older buildings in working-class Paris represents a considerable potential for gentrification. From the 1960s, the central quarters on the left bank of the Seine (*Rive Gauche*) were gradually transformed, extending the process of removal of working-class quarters that had begun with the work of Hausmann. Indeed the quality of the old buildings in the *Marais* led to rehabilitation or upgrading policies that fostered the return of the wealthier classes to this area.

As is the case with cities in the south of Europe, the French capital stands out on account of the existence a considerable mass of old buildings, and the heritage that they represent. Unlike the case of London, these buildings were largely spared the destructions of the Second World War, and the post-war period did not see city planning alterations on the scale on which they occurred in the City in London, nor indeed on the scale of what occurred in a different context in American cities such as Philadelphia (Smith, 1979). In addition, in Paris, rents were tightly controlled for a long period, which slowed speculation in real estate, or at least restricted it to certain market sectors. Thus the takeover of working-class quarters by better-off classes occurred in a gradual manner in Paris. It is only in the 1990s that gentrification became really visible, and that the demolition

of old, run-down housing was officially abandoned in favour of upgrading.

### ***Actors and factors in gentrification***

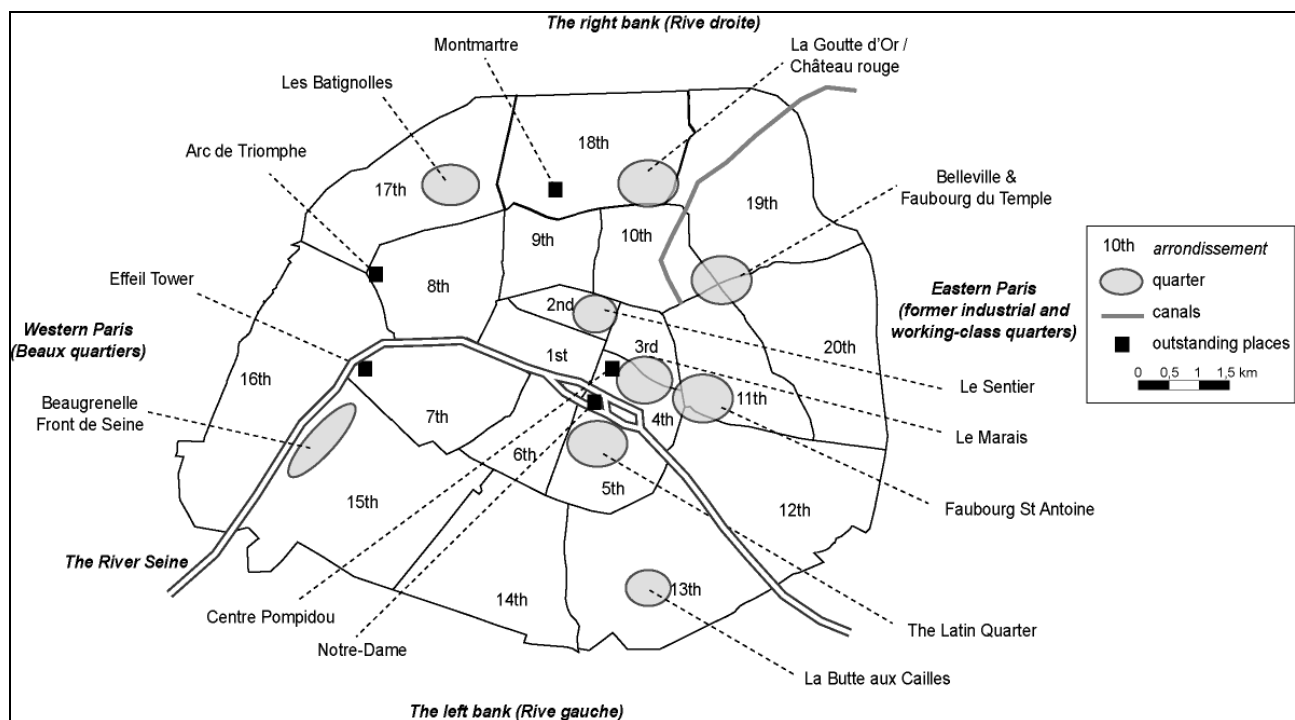
Gentrification in Paris thus occurred mainly on private initiative, via the rehabilitation and upgrading of working-class housing (Clerval, 2008b). The people subsequently moving in were often artists and architects looking for professional premises, who took over former craft and industrial workshops in the eastern part of Paris towards the end of the 1970s, sometimes in the wake of the squats that characterised that decade (Vivant & Charmes, 2008). But more widely, at the same time, middle-class households (among whom cultural professions were over-represented) acquired and rehabilitated homes in the working-class quarters (Bidou, 1984). This trend was backed up by estate agents, who increased in number with the rise in prices, by the banks, and by the fall in the cost of mortgages which partially compensated for the rise in prices (APUR, 2007b). The trend was also fostered by promoters who undertook rehabilitation and upgrading for split sales. These promoters move in when prices are sufficiently high in a given area, this being particularly characteristic of the large artisan or industrial *cours* (enclosed yards housing workshops and living premises) in Eastern Paris (Clerval, 2004), in some cases involving former factories (Clerval, 2008a).

As elsewhere, the gentrification of the working-class areas of Paris can be explained by several structural factors in the spheres of housing and employment. The most obvious of these is the continuous decrease in the number of working-class jobs in *Île-de-France* (the Paris region) and Paris from the 1960s. This was compounded by a decrease in the number of unskilled jobs in the services sector in Paris from the 1980s, while in the same period the number of managerial, professional and intellectual jobs increased (Rhein, 2007; Clerval 2008b). This change in the structure of the job market in *Ile-de-France* was the result of the redistribution and reorganisation of production worldwide, a phenomenon that was accelerated by neo-liberal macro-economic policies from the 1980s. Deregulation and the international integration of the economy increased competition among unskilled workforces on a global scale, and facilitated the globalisation of industrial production, while the metropolisation that resulted led to a concentration of qualified jobs in *Ile-de-France*. Nevertheless, the changes in the structure of the job market are not sufficient to explain the increasing social selection occurring in the residential space in the inner city of Paris (Clerval, 2008b). Here the patterns of housing and the structure of the housing market accentuated the contrasting dynamics between professional and intellectual categories and working-class categories. The earlier working-class housing was deteriorating under the effects of strategies aiming at short-term financial returns on the part of landlords, or else as a result of their intention to sell their properties (this being particularly true for complete buildings). The policy of mass construction of "social" housing in city outskirts in the 1960s and 1970s led to

the departure of large numbers of working-class people from Paris to its suburbs, generating a phenomenon of vacancy in the working-class quarters. These were then partly taken over by more precarious populations, often immigrants, and alongside them by gentrifying households. The partial vacancy and the poor state of repair of the housing created a differential in terms of economic viability (Smith, 1982) in these quarters close to the centre: after the first gentrifiers moved in and the appearance of trendy retail stores (Van Crieckingen & Fleury, 2006), numerous quarters gained lucrative potential for investors.

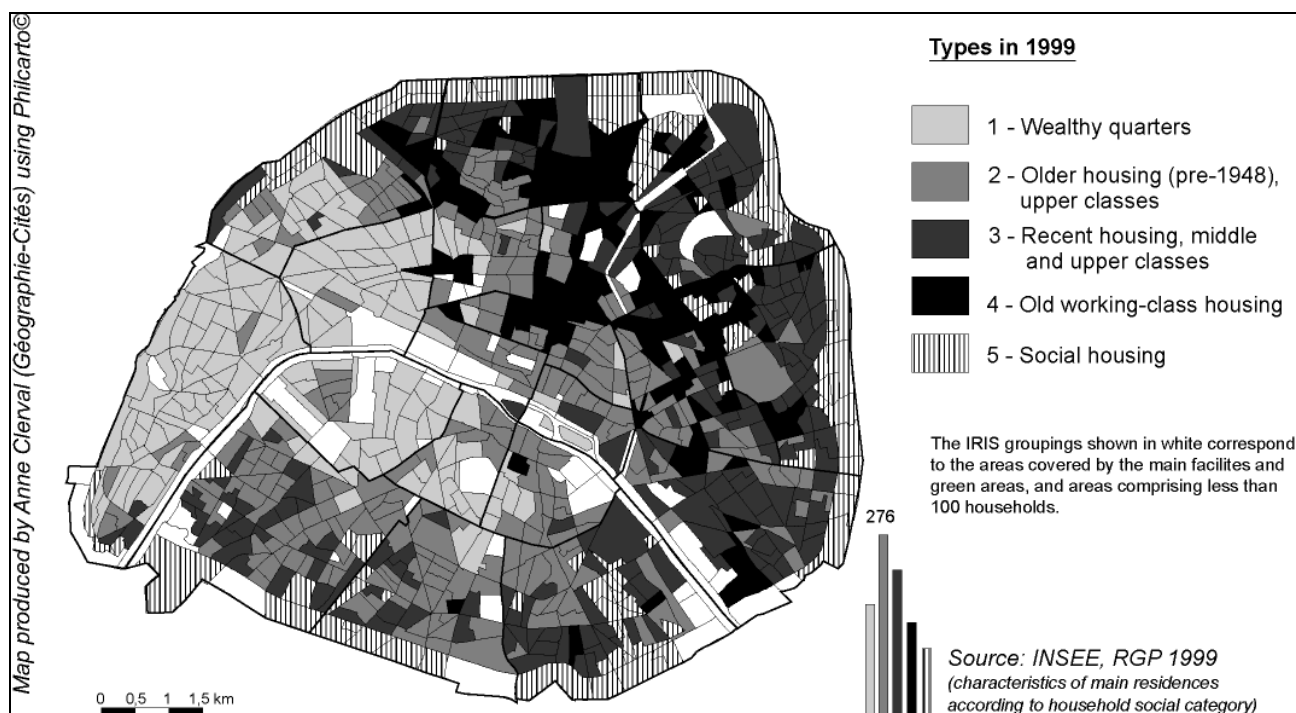
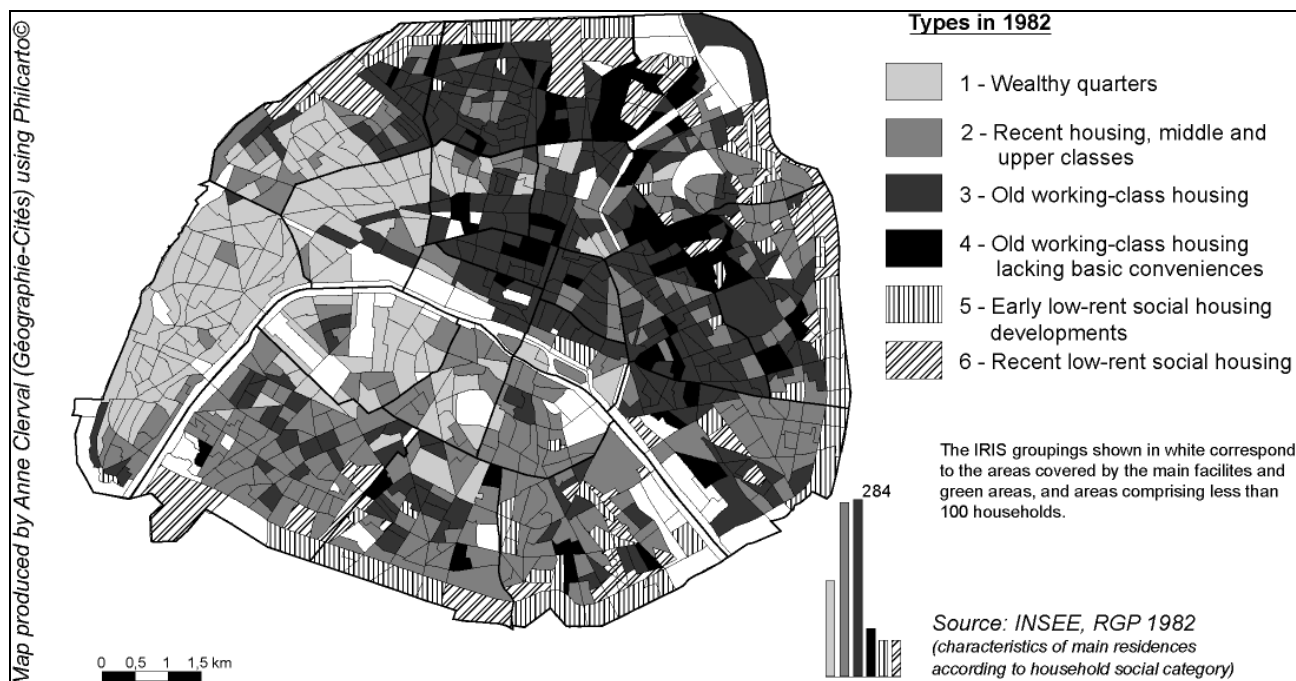
Earlier public policies had a considerable part in this process. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the operations consisting in the "renovation" of areas by way of demolition and reconstruction contributed to de-structuring working-class quarters, but at the same time led to the building of a large amount of social housing. In addition, the first gentrifiers were opposed to the demolition of old housing (Simon, 1994), which demonstrates the lasting hiatus between the public authorities and the gentrification process. However the de-regulation of rents in 1986 encouraged real estate speculation, while at the same time several prestige operations gave impetus to the upgrading process in working-class areas for the benefit of the middle and upper classes, for instance the demolition and development of *Les Halles* (originally a large covered market) and the construction of the *Georges Pompidou Modern Art Centre* (Beaubourg) in the 1970s, the rehabilitation of the *Marais* area in the same period, and the creation of certain large facilities to the east and north of Paris<sup>i</sup>.

### ***Spatial dynamics: diffusion, outposts and bypass***



**Figure 1. Paris: study area**

Figures 2 and 3 make it possible to apprehend the spatial dynamics of gentrification using a typology of the Paris IRIS (*Ilôts regroupés pour l'information statistique* - a methods of grouping housing blocks in units of around 2,000 inhabitants for statistical purposes) according to the characteristics of the housing and the socio-professional categories of the inhabitants, for 1982 and 1999. What can mainly be seen is a diffusion from the wealthy quarters (*les Beaux quartiers*) in the west. On the left bank of the Seine, gentrification is long-standing and based at once on demolition and reconstruction operations such as the *Beaugrenelle* development (15<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*<sup>ii</sup>) on the *Front de Seine*, on new private constructions in peripheral quarters, and on the rehabilitation of older housing in the quarters that had become fashionable, such as *La Butte-aux-Cailles* (13<sup>th</sup>) in the 1990s. In 1999 the left bank displayed an almost exclusively upper class profile, the only distinction being between old and new buildings. On the right bank, the large crescent of former working-class areas extending from the *Batignolles* (17<sup>th</sup>) to the *Faubourg St Antoine* (11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>) was progressively taken over and rehabilitated by middle and upper class occupants, moving outwards from the centre to the periphery. This was a continuous process of turnover of occupancy, the gentrifiers becoming increasing wealthy. This explains why in 1999 the central and immediately peri-central *arrondissements* have a wealthier social profile than those that are more peripheral, although these were also in the process of becoming gentrified. In space, this diffusion process is not completely continuous. Gentrification possesses a sort of a pioneer fringe, with outposts, particular spaces such as the *Butte Montmartre*, the canals, or the green areas, and by-pass effects, in particular around spaces with marked proportions of immigrant populations, such as the centre of the right bank (around *Le Sentier* in the 2<sup>nd</sup>) or *Belleville* (20<sup>th</sup>) and the *Faubourg du Temple* (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>). These quarters appear as pockets of resistance bypassed by gentrification, although not completely exempt from the process.



**Figures 2 and 3. IRIS typology in Paris according to main residence characteristics and social category of households in 1982 and in 1999**

## **The public policies implemented in Paris since 2001 and their role in the process of gentrification**

In 2001, the municipal elections for the first time brought a Socialist majority to power in the Paris *Mairie*. The new Mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, re-elected in 2008, communicated widely on the theme of a breakaway from the previous team, in particular on the notion of a "shared" city, both among the different social classes, and among the different users of the streets and traffic routes. This discourse made reference to new approaches to public



action, both in terms of financial investment, and in terms of the mobilisation of various means to eradicate insalubrious housing, to re-launch urban policies, and to give impetus to cultural action. We shall explore how these different policies have fitted into the Paris space on different scales, and what have been their effects on the social composition of Paris.

We will show that the real turning-point in local public policies in Paris occurred in 1995, when Jacques Chirac was replaced by Jean Tiberi, rather than in 2001. As early as 1996, six *arrondissements* in the north of the city had gone over to the political left, showing in particular the increasing opposition towards demolition and reconstruction work conducted by the previous municipal Council. The abandoning of this policy went hand in hand with the rallying of public authorities to the process of gentrification. This was occurring mainly by way of rehabilitation of older buildings, pursuing objectives of social upgrading, economic revitalisation and rehabilitation of the local heritage. The terms of "*revalorisation*" and "*revitalisation*" were commonly used by public authorities. As has been pointed out by Smith (1996) the fact that gentrifiers were referred to as "*pioneers*" implies that working-class quarters were undergoing a crisis and that gentrification was a way of "saving" them, thus masking the eviction of the working classes from the inner city. From this point of view, we will show that the Socialist Council elected in 2001 in fact pursued and amplified the policy initiated by Tiberi, without really calling the issue of gentrification into question.

### ***Urbanism and housing: preserving older buildings and re-launching the production of social housing***

At the end of the 1990s, the decline in demolition and construction operations was accompanied by a marked decline in the production of social housing. This can be explained as much by decision on the part of the Council as by an increasing withdrawal on the part of the State. The re-launching of production implemented by Delanoë preceded the return of State investment in social housing from 2004. If this is in marked contrast with the preceding municipality, we will see that the policy cannot claim to have slowed the gentrification process, and that on the contrary in certain areas it has supported it.

The re-launching of the production of social housing in Paris has been particularly highlighted in Council communication. These operations did not involve a return to the demolition and reconstruction process, but were based on more stringent requirements for the rehabilitation of old buildings and the eradication of insalubrious housing. Within these measures, work on housing improvement could be declared to be in the public interest and made compulsory for property owners. The Council could use its right to pre-empt (legally reinforced in certain quarters) to acquire run-down buildings and convert them into social housing after rehabilitation. It instated targeted operations for buildings listed as insalubrious (a task entrusted

to SIEMP - *Société immobilière d'économie mixte de la Ville de Paris*) or for certain quarters such as *Château Rouge* (18<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*). However, the planned housing improvement operations scheme (OPAH - *Opérations programmées d'amélioration de l'habitat*), an incentive-generating tool providing public grants for the improvement of old buildings, widely used by the previous municipality, continued alongside, without any specific requirements in return from the private property owners, thus fostering the process of gentrification.

The increased production of social housing was accompanied by a diversification in the modes of production and in modes of financing. New constructions were implemented alongside the rehabilitation of old buildings (acquired by the municipality) and in some cases purchase and commissioning of buildings without any work being performed. The two latter novel forms of production of social housing enabled the target of 3,000 approved homes per year to be reached as early as 2001. Production reached 4,000 homes a year in 2004 and 2005, 5,000 in 2006 and 6,000 in 2007 via the resumption of new construction<sup>iii</sup>. The objective of 20% of main residence homes being social housing (provided for in the SRU - *Solidarité et renouvellement urbain* - law of 2000) could be reached by the end of Delanoë's second term of office. In 2007, the proportion of SRU social housing had reached 15.4% in Paris (APUR, 2008). This quantitative achievement reflects a budgetary investment by the Council, housing being their second-ranking budget item at 437M euros in 2008, or an amount equivalent to the State budget devoted to rented social housing in the country as a whole.

However these figures mask the structural limitations of this endeavour. Indeed, available building plots are increasingly scarce in Paris, and new constructions are most often replacements of old buildings too run-down to be rehabilitated. Thus "official" social housing has in fact replaced *de facto* social housing, without however enabling the housing of as many individuals, both because the homes are larger, and because the ratio of the number of occupants to the number of rooms is much lower in the first instance than in the second. Thus the production of social housing needs to be positioned within the wider context of the housing pool in Paris overall. This housing, as we have seen, is markedly affected by gentrification. The process contributes to restricting the private housing rental offer, in particular the offer affordable by working-class households, i.e. *de facto* working-class accommodation. The table below shows that the production of social housing is insufficient to replace the decrease in *de facto* social housing which is estimated here via housing lacking basic conveniences<sup>iv</sup>: between 1982 and 1999 this pool lost around 300,000 units, while "official" social housing gained 60,000, the main residence pool overall remaining more or less stable.

| Year                               | Main residences                  | Homes lacking basic conveniences |                         | Social housing     |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
|                                    |                                  | numbers                          | proportion(%)           | numbers            | proportion (%) |
| 1982                               | 1,097,452                        | 322,916                          | 29.4                    | 125,180            | 11.4           |
| 1990                               | 1,095,108                        | 188,709                          | 17.2                    | 134,455            | 12.3           |
| 1999                               | 1,110,912                        | 40,069                           | 3.6                     | 185,328            | 16.7           |
| Yearly evolution                   | Homes lacking basic conveniences | Social housing                   | Year                    | SRU Social housing |                |
| 1982-1990                          | -16,776                          | +1,159                           | 2001                    | 154,314            |                |
| 1990-1999                          | -16,516                          | +5,653                           | 2005                    | 167,393            |                |
| <b>Overall evolution 1982-1999</b> | -282,847                         | +60,148                          | <b>Yearly evolution</b> | +3,270             |                |

**Table 1. Evolution of housing lacking basic conveniences compared to "official" social housing in Paris since 1982 (source INSEE RGP 1982, 1990 and 1999; Mairie de Paris, 2006)**

Thus to reach the objective of 20% social housing if the rest of the housing pool - which is private - is occupied by the middle and upper classes, equates to maintaining only 20% working class households in Paris, in other words half as many as the proportion they actually represent in the structure of the Île-de-France workforce.

In addition, not all the SRU social housing is allocated to working-class households. In particular a social housing funding system, the *Prêt locatif social* (PLS), was instated in 2001, producing homes intended for households that were 30% above the income level for obtaining PLUS accommodation (*Prêt locatif à usage social*), the classic social housing provision. The PLUS also leads to a degree of social mix, since it allows for 10% of the housing to be allocated to households with resources above the maximum level. The re-launching of the production of social housing is nevertheless grounded in this diversification of types of funding: thus PLS housing merely requires State approval without funding, which enables the State to withdraw from the production of social housing. Nearly 30% of the social housing produced in Paris since 2001 comes under the PLS system, while this does not correspond to the social structure of the demand: among the 100,000 applicants for social housing in Paris, 75% have incomes that are below the PLAI housing limit (*Prêt locatif aidé d'intégration*), intended for the lowest income category, while only 4% could apply for PLS housing (APUR, 2007a). In fact this 30% PLS housing reflects the proportion of Parisian households with incomes allowing them to apply for this type of accommodation. This can be read as a policy aiming to reorient part of the social housing pool towards middle-class households, while at the same time working-class households are experiencing ever-increasing difficulties in finding housing in Paris, whether in the social sector or in the private offer.

This diversification of the types of financing, and hence of the social status of households qualifying to apply for social housing, also serves the strategy aiming to rebalance the housing pool geographically and to enhance the social mix promoted by the Socialist municipality. The idea is to create social housing in

*arrondissements* where it is lacking, in particular “very” social housing (for the lowest incomes), and to promote PLS housing in areas where there is already 20% social housing, or more generally in working-class quarters. Thus the Municipality has acquired buildings in the Avenue Mozart (16<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* – a traditionally wealthy area) to turn them into PLAI (low-rent) housing, and has created PLS housing in the working class areas of *Château Rouge* (18<sup>th</sup>) or lower *Belleville* (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>). While the process of gentrification is already pronounced in Paris, after accelerating in the period of rising property prices from the end of the 1990s up to 2008, these immigrant quarters, as seen earlier, are those in which the process is the least advanced today. Thus in areas where this process could still be controlled – for instance by increasing the offer of genuinely social housing targeting the working class – the municipality contributes, on the contrary, to accompanying gentrification, replacing only a minority of *de facto* social housing, via demolition or upgrading, and via its conversion into social housing with particular emphasis on the PLS type. In *Château Rouge* this is accompanied by an attempt to restrict or remove so called “exotic” retail trade, frequented by African populations, and by the overall upgrading of the public space, vigorously called for by the new house-owners in the quarter (Bacqué, 2005; Clerval 2008b).

***Public space: streets and green areas. The general embellishment of the city***

The first major upgrading operations applied to the public space concerned street areas and were launched in the 1980s. In this period numerous streets and *squares* (small public gardens) were upgraded in the most emblematic quarters, mainly the historic quarters, where pedestrianised areas were created. During the mandate of Tiberi (1995-2001) a full-scale policy was established, including more local public spaces. This policy developed and became systematic in the first term of office of Delanoë (2001-2007). Within the “green quarter” policy, in particular, developments diffused across a large part of the Paris area. For the most part, this consisted in setting aside all or part of the street areas from vehicle traffic, and this involved rehabilitation of the street surfaces, widening of pavements, and also the creation of parking areas. In ever increasing number, these developments were aimed at the general embellishment of public spaces, implementing a dual process of “greening” (lining with trees, flower beds etc) and “*patrimonialisation*”, referring to the use of heritage-sensitive quality materials and traditional urban objects. The so-called “*espaces civilisés*” (or “civilianised spaces” where traffic is reduced) are one manifestation of this policy applied to the former “red” traffic routes (*axes rouges*), comprising specific facilities for buses and bicycles, and the reduction of the number of traffic lanes.

Numerous green areas were created in the 1980s and 1990s, mainly in the form of large parks within vast urban developments (*Bercy*, *André Citroën*, *La Villette*, etc). After 2000 this policy was pursued. It was necessarily restricted, for lack of space, but the

2.4 hectares developed in 2005 followed by 9 hectares in 2006 are far from negligible. This mainly concerns small local area gardens, but also involves larger parks, such as the recent *Jardin d'Eole* (18<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*) or the *Clichy-Batignolles* park (17<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*). The Municipality also undertook the rehabilitation of numerous "squares" (which in French refers to rather small squares often with trees, flowerbeds, swings etc). In all instances, the aim has been to make gardens into socialising spaces where many different occupations are possible. This also required new rules allowing public access to lawns (traditionally out-of-bounds in French parks) so that inhabitants of the quarter can picnic there, and teenagers gather. The systematic creation of playgrounds for children was also intended to develop "proximity" activities. And finally the Municipality worked for the creation of "shared gardens": even more than the "squares", these are intended for the resident population and aimed to create areas for socialising among neighbours.

A large proportion of these developments occurred in the *arrondissements* in the east and north of the city. This is true for the parks and gardens, but also for the streets and squares. The analysis of the logics of the positioning of green areas in relation to socio-demographic characteristics<sup>v</sup> shows that the public authorities have invested considerable means to enhance and upgrade streets in the most heterogeneous quarters, those undergoing the greatest changes from the socio-demographic point of view. In all, it can thus be said that the developments of public spaces in recent years have mainly involved quarters affected by a more or less advanced process of residential gentrification (table 2).

| Socio-demographic profiles                                 | Characterization   | Total number of Parisian IRIS | Number of IRIS included in "green quarters" | Proportion of IRIS included in "green quarters" in the total number of Parisian IRIS (in %) |
|--|--|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Working-class quarters with ongoing gentrification         | Young low-skilled and unskilled non-manual workers, intermediate professions | 182                           | 68  | 37  |
| "Precarious" quarters                                      | Low-skilled and unskilled workers, unemployed                                | 84                            | 27  | 32  |
| Gentrified quarters  | Young highly qualified workers   | 174                           | 51  | 29  |
| Prosperous quarters on the fringes of the wealthy quarters | Middle-aged people, managerial professions                                   | 143                           | 32  | 22  |
| Residual working-class quarters                            | Elderly and retired people, medium-skilled                                   | 92                            | 18  | 20  |
| Working-class quarters made up of social housing           | Low-skilled and unskilled workers  | 61                            | 11  | 18  |
| Working-class quarters with ageing population              | Unskilled, unemployed, low paid populations                                  | 34                            | 5   | 15  |
| Traditionally wealthy quarters                             | Highly qualified professionals, upper class, middle aged and elderly people  | 149                           | 10  | 7   |

**Table 2. The "green quarters" in their socio-demographic context**  
 (source INSEE RGP 1999, Mairie de Paris/Direction de la voirie ; based on Fleury, 2007, pp. 305-306)

It is certainly true that the effects of a development involving a public space on residential gentrification are as yet not well known. In Paris, most of the elected representatives say they remain "watchful" on the subject. As for associations for the protection or improvement of the living environment, they agree to being aware of residential dynamics, but refuse to link this to their action (Fleury, 2007). Yet the development of "proximity" or neighbourhood public spaces, which play a full part in the embellishment of the city, necessarily contributes to the increase in value of property in quarters where it is implemented. To cite just a few examples, the rehabilitation of the streets in the *Marais* quarter in the 1980s, the rehabilitation of certain quarters such as the *Butte-aux-Cailles* or *Mouffetard* in the 1990s, or the canal banks in the 1990s and beyond (*Canal St Martin*, *Bassin de la Villette*), contributed to upgrading certain portions of the urban space and hence to an increase in the value of property. The property agents made no mistake, regularly using the description "green neighbourhood" in their adverts, on a part with proximity to shops and public transport. The presence of a "square", or the aesthetic quality of the street are indeed amenities, and hence an additional selling argument.

#### ***The cultural policy: facilities and cultural events***

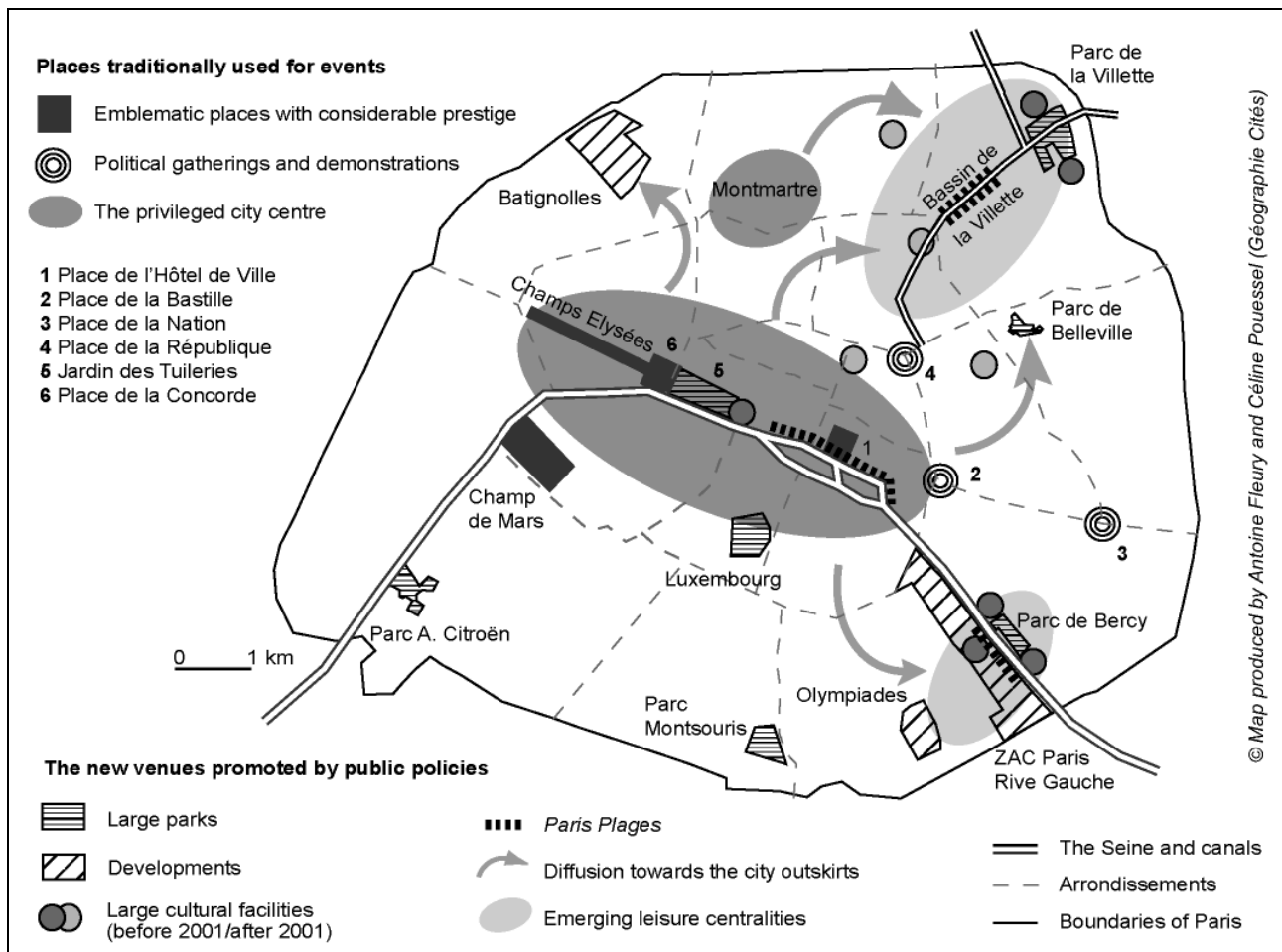
The embellishment of the city has been accompanied by efforts in the cultural sphere. Cultural policies, in classic manner, first involved the creation of new facilities. Numerous investments were made by the State, and then by the Paris Municipality, in the north-east of the city. In particular, the developments within the *Parc de la Villette* complex deserve mention: the *Zénith*, the *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie*, the *Cité de la musique*, built by the State in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, the Paris Municipality has pursued in the same direction. Several abandoned industrial sites have been converted into venues devoted to cultural production and consumption. Along the *Canal Saint-Martin*, a former building material warehouse was taken over by the association *Usines Éphémères* (literally: ephemeral factories) with the support of the Municipality. It subsequently became "*Le Point Éphémère*", and the building houses an exhibition area, a concert hall and a café, as well as artist "residences". In the *Faubourg du Temple* area, the *Maison des Métallos*, which was a famous trade union venue from the *Front Populaire* in the 1930s, was rehabilitated and converted into a cultural facility used for live shows, drastically reducing the space devoted to the associations committee that ran the place previously<sup>vi</sup>. Finally, close to the railway tracks of the *Gare de l'Est*, 35,000m<sup>2</sup> have been set aside for contemporary artistic creation, also integrating a restaurant, a café, and shops, and this was inaugurated in 2008 in n°104 rue d'Aubervilliers in the building that previously housed the city funeral enterprise. With an investment of 102M euros, equivalent

to almost a quarter of the budget devoted to social housing in 2008, this project, the "Cent Quatre" (104) constitutes the largest project in Delanoë's first term of office.

Alongside the creation of new facilities, the public authorities are also investing more and more in the organisation of cultural manifestations taking the form of events in public spaces. In particular certain major events gaining wide media coverage can be mentioned, such as *Paris Plage* or the *Nuit Blanche* (literally a "sleepless night"), and also festivals like *Paris quartier d'été* or *Cinéma au Clair de Lune*. These events take on very diverse forms, very often integrating music and dancing, but also increasingly contemporary art. Most are designed as events based on some form of scenography, and some entail non-permanent fixtures. These events are, all in all, the tools of a cultural policy that has been seeking to reach a wider public since the 1960s.

It is when their geography is observed that one becomes aware of the role that these events can have in the process of gentrification. Indeed new spaces for holding events and celebrations have emerged in the city (figure 4). The parks and the banks of the Seine have gained in frequentation, and even if the historic city centre still has an important role, the diffusion of recreational and cultural events towards the outskirts of the city is an increasing concern among protagonists in these matters (Pouessel, 2005; Fleury 2007). Among the events and festivals organised completely or partly out of doors, this trend has strengthened from one season to the next. *Paris Plage* (where stretches of the banks of the Seine are converted into a "beach" with sand and deckchairs) clearly appears as the most emblematic operation in the diffusion of festive events towards the city outskirts: it was created in 2001 on the banks of the Seine in the historical area of the city and then, under the altered name of *Paris Plages*, was extended in 2006 to the 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, along the *Paris Rive gauche* ZAC, before further extension to *la Villette* in the 19<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*.

Behind the laudable objectives of upgrading public space, familiarising people with contemporary art, or providing a beach for those who could not go away on holiday, these operations have contributed to turning the city into a sort of stage set or backdrop. They also draw a large number of citizens to quarters hitherto little frequented except by those living there (Pouessel, 2005; Fleury 2007). The public authorities, by the same token, have contributed to a change in image and in frequentation of these former working-class quarters. The effects of this are all the more marked because they reinforce the impact of the developments in public spaces completed in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, despite the fact that the centralising phenomenon is short-lived, these events make use of the large facilities already achieved or under construction in the former working-class quarters, creating new cultural centralities in a durable manner.



**Figure 4. Towards a redefinition of leisure centralities by the public authorities**

## The political meaning of urban policies

### *Accompanying gentrification*

Thus the regeneration of municipal public action in Paris since 2001, in fields as varied as housing, public space and culture, presents a degree of consistency, despite the ambiguity of the objectives set out to justify it. To interpret public action, it is not sufficient to stop at actual investment in housing and public facilities, nor at the objective, which is at once vague and consensus-prone, of maintaining a social mix in Paris. These different policies form a whole that is fully consistent with the wishes of the gentrifiers. These protagonists are often the first to speak up in the local councils (*conseils de quartier*), established by the Socialist Municipality in the different quarters to foster participation in urban policy-making by the citizens (Blondiaux, 2000). Alongside this, in quarters undergoing a process of gentrification, these local councils appear as a tool enabling justification of public policies *a posteriori* by the very people who put energy into campaigning for them, and who benefit from them.

The geography of these policies is revealing of the way in which they accompany gentrification: the working-class quarters taken



over by the middle and upper classes are those that have had the benefit of the largest numbers of creations of green areas, "green quarters", and new sporting and cultural facilities. The extension of the itinerary for the *Nuit Blanche* and the shift of *Paris Plages* to the north-east constitute explicit public support for the arrival of the gentrifiers in quarters that are still marginal in relation to this process.

### ***Policy serving the middle classes?***

More generally, the absence of reference to the process of gentrification that is underway, the manner in which it is progressing, and its spatial dynamics, casts light on the motives for embellishing the city and promoting culture within its boundaries. The establishment of large cultural facilities - despite the fact that Paris was not lacking in these - in the north-east of Paris clearly contributes to gentrification by way of culture, as in Los Angeles (Davis, 1990) or Bilbao (Vicario & Matinez Monje, 2003). Culture is not only instrumentalised in order to upgrade the image of the city and draw wealthier occupants, tourists and private investments; the creation of cultural facilities is also addressed to professionals in the cultural field, and it has been seen that these are the avant-garde of the gentrification process. The intellectual middle class, cultural professionals and highly qualified managerial staff are targeted by the policies implemented by the municipality, which is in turn composed of elected members from these same social groups. In practical terms, they are in a better position to make use of the local councils (*conseils de quartier*), the new sporting, educational and cultural facilities, or the infrastructures set aside for what is known as "*circulation douce*" (or "soft" transport, i.e. bicycles, roller skates etc.). Ideologically, it is their vision of the city that wins the day, aesthetics, heritage, and recreation: present public policies go a long way towards creating urban landscapes for "consumption" by the middle and upper classes (Smith, 2003, p.58). The orientation of urban policies in favour of the middle class is often operated under cover of the common interest, the middle class being considered to be in a clear majority<sup>vii</sup>, along the ideological lines of the averaging-out of society in the post-war boom, despite the fact that this has been completely contradicted by the tendency for the income gap to widen (Bihr & Pfefferkorn, 1999). In reality, the Parisian middle class are generally well above the median for incomes in France. Among middle-class voters, the gentrifiers vote widely for the Socialist party or the Greens, so that the municipal policies implemented in Paris are also intended to meet the approval of an electorate. The re-election of Delanoë in 2008 shows the success of this strategy: in particular the takeover of environmental concerns generally promoted by the Greens finally benefited the Socialist party, since it strengthened its hegemony across the political left at the expense of the Greens.

### ***The eviction of the working classes and the "undesirables"***

The areas where the clear distinction between the middle classes and common interest is verified are the de-structuring of the working-class quarters resulting from these different policies and the eviction of the "undesirables" (Belina, 2003). In housing, rehabilitation by private agents, as well as the eradication of insalubrious housing, have gradually led to a reduction in the housing offer affordable by the working classes. From this point of view, public policies have enabled improvement of housing conditions solely for the minority that can afford to remain in the area. More generally, public policies have tended to eliminate public spaces as they existed previously in the working-class areas,- ordinary public space, sometimes in poor condition but with a symbolic impact; they have also, in some instances, actually challenged the traditional function of spaces where people spent time as constituting public nuisances. The public authorities have thus tended to erase popular memory and belonging from places, thereby accentuating the exclusion of former inhabitants. In the same manner as commercial developments or cultural venues, a good quality "up-market" public space can constitute a symbolic barrier for certain social groups: the streets no longer draw the same public, and certain social groups no longer have reason to be there because they are not sensitive to the atmosphere of the street and its shops, or indeed they may no longer dare to go there because they are not welcomed into spaces for which they do not possess the access codes. At this point the public space is no longer hospitable (Joseph, 1998).

Exclusion can be even more radical in the case of groups considered as "undesirable". The most obvious instance is the homeless. If in Europe there are not the extreme situations found in the USA, where parks are fenced and boundaries set to avoid the homeless settling in (Smith, 1992), new designs for urban objects and amenities are emerging where the intention is the same (Zeneidi-Henry, 2003). For instance, park benches are done away with or redesigned to avoid people lying on them, and watering systems are set up on lawns. In Paris the trend is certainly less marked than in the USA, but it does exist, in particular on the strength of pressure from local inhabitants (Froment-Meurice, 2008). The presence of homeless people, drug dealers or prostitutes frequently constitutes the more or less explicit reason for a particular development, or for the organisation of events. It is the case for the area along the *Canal Saint-Martin* and the *Bassin de la Villette* (including *Place Stalingrad*). It is also the case for numerous "squares" that have been refurbished with a view to enabling re-appropriation by the local inhabitants (in particular mothers and children) of spaces that had been partially taken over by specific groups such as drug traffickers, homeless people or working-class youths. It is via an analysis of the place of the homeless in urban policies that Mitchell (1997) came to refer to the "public landscape", considering that public spaces were becoming not so much spaces in which political expression and social conflict were played out, but stage sets for

the use of well-off citizens and places from which others were excluded.

Thus analysing the policies accompanying gentrification as being aimed at the middle class is insufficient. Indeed it more generally serves the interests of the dominant class by way of an eviction of the working classes both from the city and from public debate - i.e. from the public space in its various dimensions. It contributes to the erosion of the class consciousness of the dominated population, which is an efficient means of avoiding the emergence of social conflict that might question the present class relationships.

## **Conclusion**

It thus appears that the specific features of public policies implemented in Paris in the past, as well as the maintaining of rental controls up to 1986, and the production of social housing up to the 1980s, all partly explain the late occurrence of gentrification in Paris. Nevertheless, since Haussmann, public authorities have sought to upgrade or add value to the inner city, fostering gentrification in various modes. Even today, public policies in Paris show this trend, although they cultivate a certain degree of ambiguity as to their objectives and the populations targeted. The regeneration of public action promoted by the Socialist left in Paris from 2001 has been unable to halt the process of gentrification in housing, and on the contrary has contributed to accompanying the trend by development of the public spaces and by its cultural policies.

These complex issues of public policy render research in social sciences all the more necessary on the role of such policies in the urban and social transformations occurring. This article is an invitation to explore interactions between public policies and structural changes. The action of public authorities in favour of the dominant classes is not always visible, and is tending increasingly to cover up its own footprints via communication techniques. The role of social sciences is to highlight relationships of power underpinning these policies and their effects, avoiding stopping short at the often over-moralising issues of the intentions of public agents in their effective accompaniment of gentrification, even if they are unaware of the fact.

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- i For instance the following can be quoted: the *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie* opened in 1986 on the site of the former *La Villette abattoir*, or the *Opéra Bastille* opened in 1989 on the edge of the Faubourg St Antoine which was in the process of marked gentrification.
- ii Paris is divided into *arrondissements* that are numbered from the centre outwards in spiral form.
- iii A new mode of calculation included extensive rehabilitation in the category of new constructions.
- iv This refers to housing used as main residence and provided with neither toilets nor bath/shower.
- v What is referred to here is the definition of socio-demographic profiles for the Paris IRIS developed in a study on the Paris quarters (Saint-Julien, 2008). Eight socio-demographic profiles were defined by considering the distribution of inhabitants over 15 on the basis of age, educational level, social category of households reference person, and employment status. This typology was then set against the map of the "green quarters" (Fleury, 2007).
- vi The "Comité métallos" groups local associations and inhabitants who mobilised between 1997 and 2001 to save the site, which was at the time up for part sale by the Union, from property speculation. Today this collective denounces the fact that it has been cut off from the new *Maison des Métallos* which has become a cultural establishment run by the municipality, and also the fact that it is rented out to private enterprises 30 days a year [see [www.lesmetallos.org](http://www.lesmetallos.org)].
- vii This is reported in a study for APUR, the urban development agency of the city of Paris, entitled *Les classes moyennes et le logement à Paris* (Nov 2006), in which the middle classes are defined partly arbitrarily so as to correspond to 60% of the Paris population.